



Public Safety Communications Highlights

- Glendive Chief of Police and former Chair of the Interoperability Montana Project Directors (IMPD) Alan Michaels is retiring at the end of the month. We wish him and his wife, Cindy, the very best in all their future endeavors.
- Dorothy Gremaux, 9-1-1 Supervisor and E9-1-1 Coordinator for the Central Montana 9-1-1 Center, reports that the transition to the new radio system occurred on Wed., March 7. Conventional and digital trunked radio technology are both operational and in use. Roger Hayes, Motorola, and the Industrial Communications technicians are completing some clean-up, testing and training. Dorothy expressed her thanks to them and to Charlie Gilmore, Lewis and Clark County, who worked behind the scenes to make sure the Master Zone Controller could accommodate the changeover.
- Crews are being deployed next week to continue work on the Eastern Microwave Build-out Project. All antennas, ice shields and hardware have been installed at the Fallon site. Path alignments were completed from Fox Creek to Belle Prairie to Fallon and on the spur between Belle Prairie to Makoshika.

National Emergency Communication Plan: Goal # 2



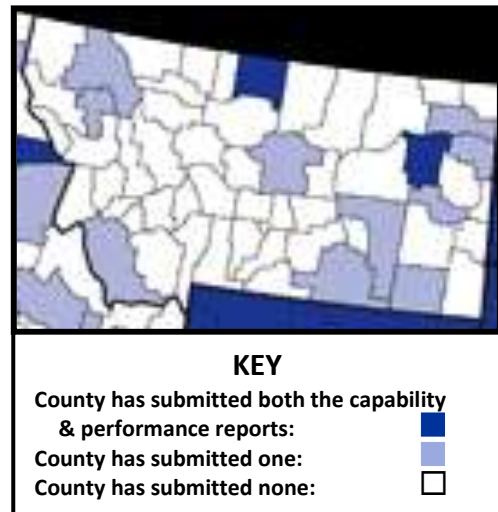
As stated in the last issue of *Heard Across Montana*, Montana counties need to get caught up on reporting their ability to demonstrate response-level emergency communications, which is Goal #2 of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP). This reporting is required by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS), Office of Emergency Communications (OEC). Montana's future access to OEC-sponsored Technical Assistance training is dependent on this reporting.

Goal 2 states that: "By 2011, 75 percent of all non-urban jurisdictions are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies." A summary of Goal 2 demonstration guidelines may be found at this [link](#).

Each county needs to report on two types of information related to response-level emergency

communications: capabilities and performance. Capability data is based on the key foundational elements of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum. Performance data focuses on the ability of primary operational leadership to communicate, manage resources, and make timely decisions during an incident, exercise or planned event.

Click [here](#) for the capabilities questionnaire and [here](#) for county performance survey. Counties shown in white or light blue on the map below are encouraged to copy and fill out these forms as soon as possible and email them to [E. Wing Spooner](#). OEC-sponsored Technical Assistance to Montana is in jeopardy if counties don't start reporting soon!



Legislative Finance Committee Presentation

On March 8, Warren Dupuis, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), gave a presentation to the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) to update committee members on the status of Montana's public safety communications system. He highlighted work that has been accomplished over the past nine months, projects that are currently underway and the plan that is in place to complete the microwave backbone with existing funding.

In his review of work that has been accomplished, Warren reported that the southwest portion of the microwave backbone now connects 23 sites. By the end of April, the microwave system will have been extended to connect another nine sites. Work is underway to improve coverage at Canadian border crossings along the Northern Tier



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and in Choteau, Flathead and Valley Counties. Plans also are in the works to upgrade eight communications sites to make them trunking capable. In addition, a planning grant is in place to assess costs and logistics of installing microwave to connect the Coburn site to the NE Billings site, continuing on to the Pompey's Pillar site, all of which are located in Yellowstone County.

Funding is still a critical issue, especially because Federal Homeland Security grant amounts this year represent about a 60% reduction from last year. Priorities are to:

- Maintain current operations
- Complete the microwave backbone
- Finish existing sites, including trunking
- Build out new sites based on population density, additional highway coverage and local coverage requirements

Warren alerted LFC members that they may expect future legislation related to work being initiated by the Statewide Interoperability Governing Board's (SIGB) Legislative Working Group (See SIGB Meeting article below). This group will be working to codify the roles, responsibilities and authority of the SIGB; to secure funding for the long-term operation and maintenance of the system; and to secure funding for planning and match requirements for build-out of the system in the future.

Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) Meeting Report



Montana's SWIC, Warren Dupuis, provided a project status report on Montana's Public Safety Communications System at the March 12 meeting of the Statewide Interoperability Governing Board (SIGB) in Helena. The presentation focused on accomplishments, emerging issues and project plans for completing the statewide microwave backbone and expanding trunking coverage using existing grant funds. A copy of his presentation slides is available at this [link](#).

The lack of trunking and adequate radio coverage in southeastern Montana was noted as an emerging concern because the dramatic surge in oil field activity has created increased demands on emergency and hazmat responders. Warren also reported the following statistics for trunked radio coverage in the state:

- 43% of interstate and secondary roads
- 34% of the population in towns
- 61% of the population in counties
- 46% of square miles of the state

The grant status report was distributed, and members approved a Grant Execution Plan to implement a build-out budget that is based on existing funding streams.

Tom Butler, Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), reported on the SIGB Technical Working Group, which met on Feb. 28 in Kalispell. The group has prepared a comprehensive spare parts list, affirmed the need for the eastern microwave build-out projects, and recommended the Centennial site over the Big John site for development because it already has power. The group has emphasized the need to examine life-cycle equipment planning matters and work on lease issues with BNSF and for the Hysham Hills site. Tom reported that a planning analysis is underway on the cost-benefits of developing additional sites north of Missoula and along Montana's northern border for significantly improved coverage. The SIGB formally approved the Technical Working Group's Charter with the addition of a vice chair position. A copy is available at this [link](#).

Beaverhead County Commissioner Mike McGinley gave a brief report on the newly formed SIGB Legislative Working Group, which met in Helena on Feb. 23. The group so far has good representation from a wide diversity of disciplines and jurisdictions, but it is still in need of a Hospital/EMS representative. SIGB members approved a motion to adopt this group's Charter with the revision of adding a vice chair position as well. Click on this [link](#) to view a copy.

Roger Smith, Lewis and Clark County, gave a technical report on the microwave system, detailing troubleshooting efforts, which included a helicopter visit to the Highwood site and snowmobile adventures at the Cominco site.

The next SIGB meeting is set for Tues., April 10 in Room 152 of the State Capitol beginning at 10:00 am. Agenda items should be provided to [Warren Dupuis](#) or [Dick Clark](#).

Upcoming Meetings

- **Tues., March 20: SIGB Technical Working Group**
Billings • 1:00 - 4:30 pm
Billings Fire Station #1 Training Rm.
2305 8th Ave. North
- **Tues., March 20: Montana Chapter APCO Mtg.**
Helena • 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
MT Law Enforcement Academy, Classrooms 204 & 205
2260 Sierra Road East
- **Thurs., March 29: State Agency Radio Users Task Force**
Helena • 1:30 - 3:00 pm
125 N. Roberts, Mitchell Building, Room 160

